United Nations

Report of the Committee on Information

General Assembly

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Supplement No. 21 (A/48/21)

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly;"

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group, 1/ reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to forty-fifth sessions, the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee 2/ and its recommendations, and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 (General Assembly resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162, 43/60, 44/50 and 45/76). At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Committee on Information and adopted its consensus recommendations as contained in General Assembly resolutions 46/73 A and B of 11 December 1991. The General Assembly further requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely China and Mexico; at its forty-first session the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe were appointed; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 members, and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Jamaica and Uruguay as members of the Committee. The General Assembly also decided on the appointment of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee on Information, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79 members and appointed Burkina Faso as a member of the Committee.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the Assembly decided on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 79 to 81 and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members of the Committee.

8. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Cyprus
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Lebanon
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Somalia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zimbabwe

II. ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

A. Opening of the session

9. The organizational meeting of the fifteenth session of the Committee was convened at United Nations Headquarters on 10 May 1993. In the absence of the outgoing Chairman, the session was opened by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information on behalf of the Secretary-General. After the election of the Bureau, the Chairman and the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made statements (see annexes I and II).

B. Appointment of new members

10. The Committee welcomed the representatives of the Republic of Korea and Senegal as new members.

C. Election of officers

11. In accordance with the principle of geographic rotation, the Committee elected the following officers for the period 1993-1994, as follows:

Chairman: Mr. Mansoor Suhail (Pakistan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Alejandro H. Nieto (Argentina)
Mr. Philemon K. Chokwe (Kenya)
Mr. Stanislaw Konik (Poland)

Rapporteur: Dr. Niall Holohan (Ireland)

D. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

12. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted, without objection, the following agenda and programme of work: 3/

1. Opening of the session.

2. Appointment of new members.

3. Election of officers.

4. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.

5. General debate and consideration of substantive questions:

   (a) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

   (b) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new

international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;

(c) Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications.

6. Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

7. Other matters.

13. The fifteenth session of the Committee on Information continued with its substantive meetings at United Nations Headquarters from 11 to 28 May 1993. For consideration of item 5 of the agenda, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures in developing countries, which was requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991 and in paragraph 17 of resolution 47/73 B of 14 December 1992; 4/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on implementation of a system-wide information programme for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 19 of resolution 47/73 B; 5/

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the publications policy of the United Nations, submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 4 of resolution 47/73 B; 6/

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information; submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 2 (e) of resolution 47/73 B; 7/

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations information centres in 1992: allocation of resources; submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 8 of resolution 47/73 B; 8/

(f) Report of the Secretary-General on the integration of United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices, while maintaining the functional autonomy of the United Nations information centres; submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of resolution 47/73 B; 9/

(g) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC); submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of resolution 46/73 B; 10/

(h) Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing, reactivation and establishment of United Nations information centres; submitted pursuant to the decision taken by the Bureau of the Committee at its meeting held on 10 February 1993. 11/

E. Observers

14. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Barbados, Bolivia, Botswana, Central African Republic, Croatia, Czech Republic, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Israel, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malawi, Panama, Suriname, Sweden and Zambia. The representatives of the Holy See and Switzerland also participated as observers.

15. Representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also attended.

16. In addition, representatives of the International Organization of Journalists and the United Nations Correspondents' Association also participated as observers.

F. Other matters

17. The Committee on Information decided to conduct further informal consultations through the Bureau, the spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China.

III. GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

18. Statements during the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee: Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark (on behalf of the European Community), Ecuador, Finland (on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States), Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Peru, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia (on behalf of the member States of the Arab Maghreb), Ukraine, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Statements were also made by the observers of the Czech Republic, Gabon and Israel. At the Committee's invitation, the representatives of UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Correspondents' Association and the International Organization of Journalists made statements.

19. In addressing the substantive questions before the Committee, all speakers alluded to the enhanced role of the United Nations in international affairs resulting from the end of the cold war. The world was looking to the United Nations for solutions to its problems, and all agreed that prompt, effective information on what the United Nations could and could not do must be provided. What was needed was a new and effective communications strategy emanating from the Organization.

20. It was vital that information was widely and rapidly disseminated to all the peoples of the world, in the spirit of "we the peoples", as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. Speakers believed that the United Nations could succeed only in a climate of well-informed public opinion; therefore public information activities must be expanded and more accurately targeted. As one delegation put it, the task was to "train" public opinion. According to many speakers, information about the United Nations was particularly needed in the developing world.

21. All delegations agreed that imagination and new ideas in the field of information were necessary to foster global awareness of the international challenges ahead and pave the way to solutions. Many speakers commented on the high profile of the United Nations in peace-keeping but believed, in the words of one delegation, that it was necessary to move beyond the drama of conflict, to hope.

22. All speakers stressed the importance of maintaining the consensus in the work of the Committee, as well as the need for its strengthening, so that new and important information work could be done in order to meet the rising expectations. One delegation, on behalf of a number of others, said that consensus was not an end in itself, but a springboard to improving the work of the Department of Public Information.

23. All delegations referred to the information revolution sweeping the world. As the power and reach of information was growing, so too they believed, was the desire of all nations to have access to this information flow in a free and balanced way. Many speakers expressed support for the new world information and communications order. They believed that priority must be given to the needs of the developing countries by the strengthening of their communication infrastructures to help redress the existing imbalance in information flows. They emphasized the essential relationship between communication and development. Many speakers felt that, without access to the communication process, new democracies and developing countries would not be able to voice their aspirations and opinions.

24. All delegations commended the work of UNESCO and its International Programme for the Development of Communication, 12/ which is intended to meet the rapidly growing needs of the developing countries, especially those countries where the democratization process is accompanied by the emergence of independent and pluralistic media. They supported the cooperation between the Department of Public Information and UNESCO in such important initiatives as the seminars at Windhoek and Alma Alta dedicated to promoting an independent and pluralistic press in their respective regions. Many looked forward to the upcoming seminar at Santiago, scheduled for 1994, whose theme would be the role of the rural press in the service of the environment and development. One delegation said that it would be interested in hosting a similar seminar for the Middle East region.

25. Many speakers said that freedom of the press was inseparable from the basic universal freedoms of information and expression. They spoke out against the harassment of journalists around the world. One delegation, on behalf of a number of others, paid tribute to the 60 journalists who had died in the past year in the performance of their duty. One speaker, representing the International Organization of Journalists, said that journalism was an increasingly perilous profession and, in this context, the Director-General of UNESCO had made an important statement on International Press Freedom Day.

26. A number of delegations said that the transfer of technology to developing countries and countries in transition must be implemented. Several delegations expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of response from the developed countries for funds for development of communications. They believed that the United Nations must help in this regard, although one speaker said that there was a lack of knowledge of possibilities for such assistance from within the United Nations system. The Department's training programme for broadcasters and journalists was mentioned as an important effort in this regard. One speaker also referred to the disparities that existed between countries within the developing world.

27. One delegation spoke out against the violation of its sovereignty committed in the name of free flow of information and alleged that the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments had been violated by the continuation of certain broadcasts aimed at his country. Another delegation, in exercise of right of reply, said that his country wanted to move beyond past rhetoric to important issues, such as strengthening public information programmes and outreach efforts. The former delegation then pointed out that the latter delegation had not denied the allegation in question.

28. In addressing the Committee, the Director of the Communication Division of UNESCO said that the situation of independent media in most new democracies was precarious, owing to: disastrous finances; lack of professional experience; out-of-date equipment; taxes; shortage of newsprint; and new legislation not conducive to democratic principles and freedom of the press. There was a great risk of seeing new democracies drift back to authoritarian ways. Communication, participation and development were part of a continuum. The International Programme for the Development of Communication had been created to help those countries with little or no access to the communications process.

29. In addressing the subject of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, all speakers congratulated the new Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information on his appointment and expressed their appreciation to him for his thought-provoking and comprehensive overview of the new structure of the Department and the progressive goals he hoped to achieve.

30. Many delegations expressed their full support for the emerging new spirit and direction of the Department, particularly with regard to the emphasis on "outreach" and "advocacy". They suggested that the policy of the new Assistant Secretary-General could be of vital importance in giving a more productive and innovative role to the Department of Public Information. One delegation said, however, that the demoting of the head of the Department to the level of an Assistant Secretary-General was deplorable, particularly at the present time when the workload of the Department was increasing.

31. The Department's policy of communications needed not just to inform, but to move, according to one delegation. All agreed that the Department must seek more effective channels to reach public opinion. One delegation believed that special strategies on a sector-by-sector basis should be developed, and that the Department of Public Information should use the "multiplier" effect to send the United Nations message through every means at its disposal. A number of speakers believed that the Department must be more specific in targeting of its audiences. One delegation believed the Department could, and should, identify emerging topics on the world's agenda. Also, it was agreed that the Department must make full use of new technologies.

32. As to the composition of staff in the Department, a number of speakers discussed the importance of equitable geographic distribution. Black and francophone Africa needed more representation, in the opinion of some speakers. One delegation said that French-speaking African women were ignored in the Department. It was stated that other linguistic groups existed and deserved to be represented in the way that the English-speaking group was. According to some delegations, the fair distribution of posts was necessary, both geographically and linguistically.

33. One delegation commented that, in its view, staff members in the Department of Public Information should be rotated and also that people should not stay in the field too long. A review of career development was needed for the Dag Hammarskjöld Library as well, the speaker said.

34. A number of speakers stressed that the Department of Public Information needed continually to prioritize its information activities and to dispense with outdated mandates. In the opinion of many delegations, senior staff should have the budgetary flexibility to move resources as needed to emerging areas of importance.

35. Many speakers emphasized the importance of inter-agency cooperation, as a means for the Organization truly to speak with one voice, guarantee the most comprehensive coverage of its activities and maximize increasingly scarce resources. In that context, support was expressed for the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) and the Department's leadership role in that Committee. The representative of UNFAA said that cooperation in the United Nations system to promote awareness of the social, economic and environmental implications of population issues was particularly vital. Several speakers observed that people's participation in development could be strengthened by inter-agency cooperation. One delegation said that it would appreciate the assistance by the Department in bringing the United Nations to its schools, through a model United Nations programme.

36. On the subject of the Department's coverage of activities mandated by the General Assembly, delegations expressed support for the Department's important work over the past year. The many activities relating to the important issues of peace-keeping, peacemaking and preventive diplomacy were noted and vigorously supported by all speakers. Several commented on the particular usefulness of the poster on peace-keeping and hoped that it could be distributed to

schoolchildren world wide in all official languages of the Organization. A number of speakers noted the importance of an information component in the planning for any peace-keeping operations in order to help to guarantee their success. Several speakers said that providing precise information on the nature and objectives of peace-keeping operations was vital, as a means of promoting realistic expectations from the United Nations activities.

37. A number of speakers noted that the important high-profile role of the United Nations in peace-keeping throughout the world today could possibly obscure the importance of the Organization's activities. The Director of the Division of Public Affairs of UNDP said that development goals were being curtailed because of civil wars, economic recession and other circumstances. AIDS programmes and refugee programmes were being adversely affected, for example. In his words, that amounted to a "serious slippage in the development agenda of our planet".

38. Many speakers said that it was critically important that the Department disseminate more information on United Nations activities in the field of development. Several speakers said that peace and development were a continuum, and that an "agenda for peace" must be followed by an "agenda for development".

39. Many speakers underscored the importance they attached to the upcoming World Summit for Social Development, to be held in 1995, and said that they expected that the Department of Public Information would focus its activities on this important event. One speaker characterized it as a "summit of people". Also, many said that they viewed the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1995 as a good opportunity to reflect on the United Nations achievements and its strategic plans for the next century.

40. Regarding the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, many speakers praised the Department for its excellent work in promoting and servicing the event, and hoped a similar approach to other important upcoming conferences would be forthcoming. Several speakers noted the success of cooperation of the Joint United Nations Information Committee on this ground-breaking Conference. One speaker noted also that links with the private sector had been forged in information activities for the Conference, which was a valuable initiative.

41. Many delegations spoke of the importance they attached to the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in 1994, the World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995 and the World Conference on Human Rights, to be held in June 1993, as well as to the International Year of the Family, to be observed in 1994. Another delegation noted the need also to develop an information programme for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II), to be held at Istanbul in 1996. Two delegations also requested a system-wide information programme on Chernobyl, to observe the tenth anniversary of that catastrophe and call attention to its long-lasting, dangerous aftermath.

42. Several delegations supported and commended the Department's work on Palestine and South Africa. One delegation expressed the view that information on South Africa should continue until the democratic process in that country was complete. Another supported the Department's work on decolonization issues

43. Commenting on the two reports on publications and publications policy before the Committee, a number of speakers emphasized the fundamental importance of publications in the Department's information programme and believed they should be a major focus of deliberations in the Committee on Information. Several speakers suggested reducing expenditures by a better utilization of

in-house printing and translation facilities. Many speakers said that they believed it important to put publications, where appropriate, on a cost-effective, more commercial footing and allow the market to determine their worth. In addition, that was a means of increasing the Department's resources. In that connection, one delegation proposed the establishment of a subcommittee to explore and recommend how best to commercialize selected publications.

44. Several speakers said that, while in theory this was a good principle, it could lead to the people in developing countries, who most needed the publications, being deprived of them. One speaker believed all United Nations periodicals should be offered free of charge world wide.

45. A number of speakers commented favourably on the Department's publications, such as the UN Chronicle, Yearbook of the United Nations, Africa Recovery and Development Forum. In the case of the latter publication, several delegations believed that its suspension could contribute to the marginalization of economic and social issues. One delegation said that the Chinese edition of the UN Chronicle was very well received. However, several delegations believed that the publications did not adequately reach the developing world. More were needed, they believed, and in other languages, especially French. One delegation requested booklets in Bangla to inform its people about United Nations peace-keeping activities. One delegation cautioned the Cartographic Unit of the Department to be more accurate.

46. In noting the integration of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library into the Department of Public Information, many speakers welcomed the idea of transforming it into a dynamic forum for intellectual and cultural exchange and an instrument of international contact. However, one delegation noted the necessity of following up with realistic means of implementation, taking into account financial realities.

47. The importance of radio in the Department's information programme efforts was emphasized by many speakers. They saw it as a direct and practical means to have an impact on people in developing countries, thereby enabling the Department of Public Information effectively to reach all corners of the globe. One speaker said that it was particularly important in the Asia-Pacific region, which was the most populous. A speaker asked for inclusion of the Nepali language in the Department's radio programming, while another delegation expressed interest in the Japanese radio programmes being revived.

48. One delegation commended the Department's African radio services, but said there was an urgent need on the part of African radio stations for even more information. One speaker said that radio was important in peace-keeping missions, such as those undertaken in Namibia and Cambodia.

49. Several delegations mentioned their interest in the possibility of the United Nations having its own short-wave radio station. For budgetary reasons, one speaker believed alternative means should be found through the channels of national, international or other established stations. In that context, the use of the broadcasting facilities of the University for Peace was also mentioned.

50. The value of the daily press releases provided by the Department was remarked on by many delegations who found them invaluable in keeping the media and delegations well briefed. They were particularly important to the smaller permanent missions, it was pointed out. Many speakers urged their continuation. One speaker asked that every effort be made to ensure equal coverage of meetings press releases in English and French.

51. The President of the United Nations Correspondents' Association said that he believed that the renovation of the press area was undertaken with too little consultation with his organization. An ongoing dialogue on that subject was needed, as professional news coverage was vital to explaining the United Nations activities to the world. In addition, he thought that the designation of a Security Council spokesman would facilitate coverage of that important area. That idea was also supported by one delegation. Also, better access to documents was needed, such as in the case of reports of the Secretary-General and of the Security Council. A number of speakers echoed the belief that the Department's facilities for media, including accreditation and documentation areas, remained inadequate. Two speakers suggested forming a small task force to see how that situation could be redressed.

52. Several delegations thanked the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General for its daily press briefings. Many speakers acknowledged the increasing pressures on that office and its important role in promoting understanding between the Secretary-General and Member States. On the subject of briefings, one delegation suggested that the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information should give monthly briefings to Member States on important developments in the United Nations system.

53. With regard to the issues contained in the three reports on the United Nations information centres before the Committee, all delegations underscored the increasing importance of these centres, which they believed had a key role to play in the Department's new outreach and advocacy strategy. At the same time, speakers in the debate were aware of the need to improve productivity based on a more rational and efficient use of limited resources. Many delegations saw the integrated offices as the best means to that important end. Many others saw a better balanced reallocation of existing resources among the centres in developed and developing countries as the most pressing issue.

54. Many speakers supporting the integration of the United Nations information centres with field offices of UNDP and other United Nations offices said that they believed that positive results had been achieved, and functional autonomy preserved. One delegation, in supporting integration, said that the process should not be restricted to the 18 centres which had already been integrated, nor should it take place without appropriate legislation. In his opinion, it also should be extended to the centres in developed countries.

55. Other speakers supported the idea of a "unified" image of the United Nations in the field in principle, but took issue with some aspects of the implementation process. One delegation said that the number of staff in integrated centres needed to be increased and that the recruitment of local staff and the creation of national information officers were important. Another said that his country was opposed to the idea of delegating administrative powers and authority in the integrated centres to UNDP resident representatives.

56. A number of delegations believed that integration should not proceed further until it was discussed in depth in the Committee. Those speakers stated that they believed that the criteria and goals for integration needed to be defined.

57. Many speakers felt that the geographic location of centres should meet the needs of both the United Nations and Member States. They believed that the centres were an important source of information in the developing countries and particularly in countries in transition.

58. As to allocation of funds, it was a matter of maintaining centres where they could have the most impact, according to a number of speakers. Some

delegations pointed out that the interests of both developed and developing countries would be better served by a streamlining of the United Nations information centres system, with a view to making it more efficient and productive. Others said, however, too much was being paid for premises in developed countries where knowledge about the United Nations was already widespread. It was a paradox that the rich countries absorbed most of the centres' budget, whereas the countries with limited means had to make additional contributions, some said. One delegation suggested that the high-cost centres should be scaled down and any savings redeployed for new centres and the strengthening of the existing ones in developing countries.

59. One delegation suggested the establishment of a network of small centres under the supervision of a large existing regional one, in order to deliver the maximum amount of information to the widest possible audience.

60. A number of countries felt that the policy of integration had resulted in eliminating some posts of centre director, as well as of some centres. One speaker suggested that the Joint Inspection Unit should have been consulted, as the creation of centres had been a decision of the General Assembly.

61. Several speakers indicated that they felt that Africa was bearing the brunt of these new measures, while receiving no consultation or clear explanations along the way. Centres at Bujumbura and Brazzaville were anomalies, because they had free premises, but no directors, according to one speaker. At Dakar, where the centre covered a region, the centre Director did not even have the resources to travel to the countries under his jurisdiction, it was pointed out.

62. Several speakers indicated that they believed that integration was not the proper response in Africa and, indeed, in the rest of the developing world. At a time when the United Nations needed a strengthened information campaign and when the winds of freedom were so strong, it seemed a paradox, in the words of one speaker, to be cutting back in those important regions.

63. Several delegations insisted that all provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/73 B be implemented, including, inter alia, the mandated establishment of the centre at Sana'a, and the enhancement of centres at Dar es Salaam, Dhaka, Tehran and Bujumbura. Several questioned why the post at Ouagadougou had not been filled. One speaker called for the opening of a new centre in Gabon. Another reiterated the interest of his delegation in establishing an information component within the UNDP office at Sofia.

64. One delegation offered premises, equipment and salary for a small centre at Bratislava. Another said that he hoped for the early opening of the centre at Conakry. One delegation expressed satisfaction at the increased cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica and expressed the hope that the University could also function as a United Nations information centre.

65. Many delegations said that they looked forward to a report to be presented at the next session of the Committee on Information session on the 18 centres which had already been integrated with field offices of UNDP. Specifically, one delegation asked for details on the accountability of managers and the sharing of resources in the integrated centres. Another asked for a report on the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the centres' functioning during the ongoing trial period. One speaker asked that the report include observations and recommendations made by local users of the various centres.

66. In regard to the effective procedures and policy of the centres in general, several delegations said that the centres must play a greater feedback role to

help the United Nations in its efforts towards preventive diplomacy. Another speaker felt that that was not an appropriate role for the centres to play, as they had enough responsibilities to shoulder already. Greater attempts to involve academic circles, the mass media and non-governmental organizations in the field were necessary, according to some delegations. One speaker suggested convening more regional events for non-governmental organizations with the help of the centres, such as perhaps a meeting for non-governmental organizations of the Russian Federation.

67. As to the interim offices established in some republics of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, many speakers said that they believed them to be an important step towards integration of United Nations activities in the fields of technical cooperation and information, and were thus useful institutions. For example, one speaker said that the office at Kiev had yielded positive results. On the other hand, several speakers expressed reservations on the interim offices, believing that an intergovernmental mandate was necessary to establish them and that a fait accompli should not be accepted.

68. The relationship between the Committee and the Department was discussed by a number of speakers. Many delegations were of the opinion that the Committee on Information should define priorities and set broad policy guidelines, not micro-manage the Department. The Department should, in turn, provide its own new ideas, since the exchange of information between the Department and the Committee was vital. It was agreed that members of the Committee should be better informed about the Department's activities in general, and that those should become more transparent.

69. Several delegations indicated their belief that the Committee on Information must strive to tackle new areas of interest in its resolutions, in order to keep the Department's priorities current and focused. One delegation commented on the repetitive pattern of past resolutions and believed that the Committee on Information should find new common ground in order to enhance the work of the Department of Public Information.

70. At the close of the general debate, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information provided additional information on the work of the Department as well as on the new challenges before it, and responded to specific questions and comments posed by the delegations. He was appreciative of the many expressions of support for the activities of the Department and its staff, and noted that all observations would serve as inspiration for advocating and communicating more effectively the message of the United Nations to its audiences world wide.

71. Referring to the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development, the Assistant Secretary-General emphasized the need to design thematically integrated information programmes with people in mind, to mobilize public opinion everywhere, and to foster a more effective exchange of information about the common goals that bind the North and the South in order to ensure that all of the world's people consider as their own the concerns and challenges facing the international community.

72. He referred to the Secretary-General's vision of peace, democratization and development as a continuum requiring cooperation and interaction within the United Nations family. The world organization must continue to give a voice to the wave of democratization and to the demand for development sweeping the globe. The Assistant Secretary-General, referring to information support by the Organization in electoral processes and people's participation in societal affairs, said that the United Nations and its family of agencies must respond together to these legitimate expectations.

73. With regard to the question of the integration of United Nations information centres with other field offices, the Assistant Secretary-General explained that the criteria for this process reflected practical concerns, and the need for a unified United Nations team that "speaks with one voice". The integrated information centres would continue to be directly responsible to the Department of Public Information in the performance of their public information functions and would fully maintain their functional autonomy.

74. The geographical location of information centres and allocation of regular budgetary resources to finance their operations were deserving of the urgent and imaginative attention of the Committee. The Assistant Secretary-General pointed out that solutions for the inequities in this regard would require guidance from the Committee on Information. With regard to the establishment of the new information centres and components requested by a number of delegations, as well as the enhancement and reactivation of existing centres, such as the ones at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Tehran, the essential prerequisite must be the full approval and provision by the General Assembly of the additional staffing and financial resources needed.

75. The Assistant Secretary-General said that the Department, within its present resources, produced on a weekly basis radio programmes in 19 languages for distribution to more than 1,700 broadcasting organizations in all regions of the world. He shared the assessment of delegations that radio remained the most important means of communication, especially for developing countries and thanked the delegations for the cooperation of broadcasting organizations located in their respective countries which provided transmitter facilities for the Department's radio programmes. The Department was continuing its contacts with other broadcasting organizations to widen the dissemination of its programmes.

76. As the need to expand radio services would become more important in light of the approaching fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the Assistant Secretary-General welcomed the proposal of some delegations to pursue further the possibility of a broadcasting capability owned and operated by the United Nations.

77. In the field of development and promotion of pluralistic media, the Department would continue its efforts jointly undertaken with UNESCO and other institutions, particularly UNDP, to hold seminars on this issue in Latin America in 1994 and in the Arab region in 1995.

78. Regarding United Nations peace-keeping operations and related information activities, the Assistant Secretary-General stressed the importance of timely and "easy-to-understand" information material. The Department would continue to work with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations on basic information requirements for such operations.

79. Responding to questions on the sale of United Nations publications and information materials, the Assistant Secretary-General explained that the publishing activities of the United Nations were an international public service aimed at ensuring that valuable information could be used by all, regardless of their purchasing power, as well as advocating United Nations issues that were not always of immediate interest to the general public. In the United Nations, the aim of sales was to increase distribution of publications without additional costs, and to recover some of the production costs.

80. The Assistant Secretary-General noted the delegations' support and appreciation for several publications of the Department, particularly Africa Recovery. In response to the expressed support for Development Forum,

which, for financial reasons, was terminated on 31 December 1992, the Assistant Secretary-General assured the Committee that the Department remained committed to the idea of a regular publication on development issues, and would explore ways and means to fill this vacuum.

81. The Assistant Secretary-General thanked delegations for their expressions of support on proposals to open the Dag Hammarskjöld Library to the public, and have it function as a cultural centre. With regard to the present outreach activities provided by the Library, he pointed to: its services to the public through 330 depository libraries in 130 Member States; its training programmes in the management and use of United Nations documentation for information centres, depository libraries and reference libraries within and beyond the United Nations; the orientation programmes for representatives and experts of Member States, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and news media accredited to the United Nations; and the growing use of the Library's on-line databases.

82. In view of the various expressions of interest and concern regarding the services provided to the media at Headquarters, the Assistant Secretary-General referred to efforts made over the past months by the Department to find solutions to this protracted problem. He welcomed proposals for the creation of a small task force to look into how the present shortcomings could be redressed within existing resources. The Department of Public Information would continue to consult with United Nations Correspondents' Association and the concerned offices in the Secretariat in an effort to resolve these problems.

83. The Assistant Secretary-General reiterated his suggestion to work, on a continuing basis, together with the extended Bureau of the Committee to solve the problems of the Department. He hoped that the recommendations of the Committee would take this offer into account.

84. New applications for membership in the Committee were then considered. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the enlargement of its membership from 81 to 82 members and to submit the candidacy of Gabon to the General Assembly for approval (see draft decision in para. 88, below).

85. With regard to the application of Israel to become a member of the Committee, one delegation stated that it wished to make an objection in the strongest possible terms on the grounds that it did not recognize the State in question and that many official publications in the State in question amounted to propaganda. Another delegation, speaking on behalf of a number of the Arab States members of the Committee on Information, objected to the application on the grounds of the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the non-compliance by Israel with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It was proposed by one delegation that the application of Israel be deferred for consideration at a later date. Following interventions by several delegations, it was finally agreed, without a vote being taken, to recommend to the General Assembly that the Committee on Information be enlarged from 82 to 83 members and that the application by Israel for membership in the Committee be accepted (see draft decision in para. 89, below).

IV. PREPARATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

86. At its 10th meeting, on 28 May 1993, the Committee decided by consensus to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution A

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

Urges that all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process", should:

(a) Cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) Ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) Provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) Enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) Aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) Provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the primary role of the General Assembly in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

Taking note of all reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the fifteenth session of the Committee on Information,

1. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information;

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of the United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following

recommendations in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and in this regard to ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Continues to disseminate information about the activities of the United Nations in coordination with the information services of other relevant agencies in accordance with the United Nations medium-term plan, the programme budget and their relevant revisions, pertaining, inter alia, to:

(i) International peace and security;

(ii) Disarmament;

(iii) Peace-keeping operations and peacemaking;

(iv) Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the light of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism;

(v) The promotion and protection of human rights and in that context the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights;

(vi) The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;

(vii) The advancement of the status of women and their role in society;

(viii) The promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(ix) Problems of economic and social development, as well as international economic cooperation aimed at resolving external debt problems;

(x) The least developed countries;

(xi) The environment and development;

(xii) The elimination of foreign occupation;

(xiii) The campaign against terrorism in all its forms in line with General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;

(xiv) International efforts against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking;

(xv) Crime prevention and criminal justice;

(xvi) Support for the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and for the tremendous efforts of the African countries aimed at recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(xvii) International efforts towards the total eradication of apartheid and support for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa and, where necessary, the role of the United Nations in this context;

(xviii) United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, also including current developments in that region and the ongoing peace process;

(b) Provides the necessary level of information support for the activities of the United Nations in situations requiring immediate and special response;

(c) Continues its efforts at promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and at strengthening the positive image of the system as a whole;

(d) Continues its briefings, assistance and orientation programmes for broadcasters, journalists and other media professionals from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(e) Provides, on the basis of its activities, information to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization about new forms of cooperation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries;

(f) Continues its policies of cooperation with all agencies of the United Nations system, in particular with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

(g) Continues its policies of cooperation with the news agencies in and of the developing countries, in particular the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries;

3. Welcomes the decision by the Department of Public Information to establish a task force to look into the allocation of office space to the media at United Nations Headquarters;

4. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General 7/ regarding the continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information and urges all efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its major publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations and Africa Recovery, maintaining consistent editorial independence and accuracy, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions wherever they occur;

5. Expresses regret at the circumstances leading to the closing down of Development Forum, and encourages the Secretary-General to suggest ways and means to revive Development Forum, which has continued to receive a mandate of the General Assembly, and report thereon to the Committee on Information;

6. Requests the management of the Department of Public Information to review the Department's publications and proposals for publications to ensure that all publications fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system, and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner, and report to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth substantive session;

7. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information about United Nations activities and the optimization of the resources allocated to the Department of Public Information;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the sixteenth session of the Committee on Information, for the purpose of evaluating the need for any subsequent integration, the results of the current trial of integrating 18 United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations

Development Programme as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. 9/ The report should also contain the views of the host countries, bearing in mind the concerns of Member States that the integration of the United Nations information centres with the United Nations offices could adversely affect their functions in the developing countries;

9. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of new United Nations information centres;

10. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that his proposals relating to the structure, functions and activities of the seven United Nations interim offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan fully comply with the mandates of the relevant General Assembly resolutions pertaining to operational activities and dissemination of information, taking into account the observations and recommendations of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/47/7/Add.16), the General Assembly decision (47/469) and relevant General Assembly resolutions, especially resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992;

11. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General 8/ regarding the allocation of resources to the United Nations information centres in 1992 and would appreciate information on the status of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, as well as a detailed break-down of resource deployment between centres and, while welcoming the action by some Governments with regard to the financial and material support for United Nations information centres in their respective capitals, calls upon the Secretary-General to study ways and means to rationalize and effect equitable disbursement of available resources to all United Nations information centres and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth substantive session;

12. Notes the substantial contribution by the Government of Poland and requests the Secretary-General to continue to consult with the Polish authorities, with a view to finalizing arrangements for a United Nations information component at Warsaw;

13. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General 11/ regarding the enhancing, reactivation and establishment of United Nations information centres 11/ and again calls upon the Secretary-General to implement fully and expeditiously the recommendation contained in paragraph 10 of resolution 47/73 B regarding:

(a) The establishment of a United Nations information centre at Sana'a;

(b) The reactivation of the United Nations information centre at Tehran;

(c) The enhancement of the information centres at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka, and submit the implementation report to the sixteenth substantive session of the Committee on Information;

14. Further calls on the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the aforementioned recommendation to the sixteenth session of the Committee on Information;

15. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General 11/ and encourages continued enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

16. Takes note of the requests by Bulgaria, Gabon, Haiti and Slovakia for information components;

17. Expresses full support to the wide and prompt coverage of United Nations activities through a continuation of United Nations press releases;

18. Calls upon the Secretary-General to enhance the efficiency of regional radio units in the Department of Public Information;

19. Calls upon the Secretary-General to make every effort to create conditions more conducive to achieving parity by appropriate utilization of existing equipment in the press coverage of meetings in English and French;

20. Takes note of the recommendations and observations by Member States contained in the Secretary-General's report 4/ and invites Member States that wish to do so to submit their observations and suggestions to the Secretary-General by 1 January 1994, on ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities, freely and independently, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session;

21. Recommends, in order to facilitate continued contact between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information between sessions, that the Bureau of the Committee on Information, together with representatives of each regional group, the Group of 77 and China, in close contact with members of the Committee on Information, should meet, as required, and consult at periodic intervals with the Department of Public Information;

22. Supports decision 5 of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, requesting the Secretary-General to develop and launch, on a priority basis, in cooperation with relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes, a specific programme of public information on the core issues of the World Summit for Social Development as well as on its objectives;

23. Supports the decision of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in 1994, requesting the Secretary-General to develop and launch, on a priority basis, a coordinated public information programme, in cooperation with competent United Nations bodies and specialized agencies;

24. Takes note of the request by Belarus and Ukraine to consider the development and implementation of a system-wide programme for the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster in 1996;

25. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session in 1994 and to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session in 1994, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

26. Decides that the next session of the Committee on Information should last 12 working days and invites the Bureau of the Committee to explore ways and means of making optimum utilization of the Committee's time;

27. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session;

28. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-ninth session the item entitled "Questions relating to Information".

87. Also at its tenth meeting, the Committee decided, by consensus, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decisions:

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

Draft decision I

88. The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 81 to 82 members and decides to appoint Gabon as a member of the Committee on Information.

Draft decision II

89. The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 82 to 83 members and decides to appoint Israel as a member of the Committee on Information.

90. After the adoption, without a vote, of the draft report as orally revised, closing statements were made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information and the Committee Chairman, as well as by the representatives of the Group of 77 and of the Group of Western European and other States, and China.

91. The Chairman announced that the next session of the Committee on Information was scheduled for 9 to 24 May 1994.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/39/21); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No.21 (A/40/21); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/42/21); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/43/21); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/44/21); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/45/21); ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/46/21).

3/ A/AC.198/1993/1.

4/ A/AC.198/1993/2.

5/ A/AC.198/1993/3.

6/ A/AC.198/1993/4.

7/ A/AC.198/1993/5.

8/ A/AC.198/1993/6.

9/ A/AC.198/1993/7.

10/ A/AC.198/1993/8.

11/ A/AC.198/1993/9.

12/ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, vol. I, Resolution, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

ANNEX I

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of the fifteenth session

I would like, first of all, to thank the members of the Committee on Information for placing their trust in me and electing me Chairman of this important Committee. This election represents a great honour and unequivocal expression of confidence in my country, Pakistan, and in me personally, that comes after so many years of my association with the Committee on Information and of working closely together with so many old friends. I shall endeavour to live up to your expectations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Mr. Ricardo Lagorio of Argentina, who was able to develop an atmosphere of cooperation that helped us to maintain and broaden the consensus on major issues before this Committee that I consider as one of our major achievements over the past few years. It is my intention to continue on the path that he blazed.

Permit me also to say how delighted I am to have such distinguished fellow officers as Mr. Konik of Poland, Mr. Nieto of Argentina and Mr. Chokwe of Kenya as Vice-Chairmen, as well as Dr. Holohan of Ireland as the Rapporteur. Benefiting from their profound knowledge of the issues before this Committee, I am sure that together we shall be able to go a long way towards meeting the objectives before us at this session.

I would also like to welcome Mr. Marco Vianello-Chiodo, the new Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, who has already impressed us with his dedication, wisdom and energy, as well as with his personal and professional skills. To Mr. Vianello-Chiodo and to the staff of the Department we extend our wishes for our continued close and fruitful cooperation.

Last but not least, I would also like to welcome the delegations of the Republic of Korea and Senegal, the newest members of our Committee. Their participation certainly further enhances the standing of this Committee and broadens the diversity of its membership.

We live in a period of exciting and momentous changes; a period also filled with great expectations placed on the United Nations. At this critical juncture, the importance of public information as a means of mobilizing support for the wide range of activities of the Organization cannot be overemphasized. As a result, this year we are faced with the challenge of drafting a set of recommendations that will help guide the Department of Public Information in both its general policy and its specific activities in this important period.

In this regard, we view with interest the intention of the Secretary-General to restructure the Department of Public Information in order to streamline its operations and enable it to better address the changing needs of the Organization. We are looking forward to hearing more on this matter from the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Vianello-Chiodo, hopefully to be followed by a constructive exchange of views.

As has been the case in the past few years, the questions relating to the United Nations information centres will certainly continue to dominate the deliberations of our Committee at the present session. The Committee is strongly in favour of maintaining and strengthening further the network of existing information centres, providing them with both the adequate human and operational resources that would enable them to spread the message of the United

Nations around the world. At the same time, I wish to recall that, as reiterated in its resolution 47/73 B of 14 December 1993, the General Assembly, at the recommendation of this Committee, reaffirmed its role in relation to the opening of any new United Nations information centres. We in the Committee remain open to continuing dialogue with the Secretariat with a view to benefiting from its considerable expertise and experience in this area.

As delegations are aware, for a number of years now, the Committee has been looking into the ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their information and communications capacities, freely and independently. For two years now we have been asking for observations and suggestions of Member States in this regard, and I am happy to note that some 11 of them have responded so far. In view of the importance of this issue to such a large number of Member States, I would like to suggest that at this session we renew a call for Member States to provide us with information on this issue, for consideration at the next session of the Committee on Information.

Another issue that the Committee should address this year relates to the publications of the Department of Public Information. In this regard, we welcome the transfer to the Department of the part of the former Publishing Division in the Office of Conference Services, as well as the secretariat of the Publications Board, with the hope that this consolidation will result in better streamlining of the whole operation, as well as in a clearer publications policy for the Department of Public Information. I am looking forward to an exchange of views on this important issue.

Before concluding, allow me to stress how much I count on your cooperation and spirit of team work in our joint effort of reviewing the United Nations information policies and practices and preparing a set of succinct, workable and action-oriented recommendations on a variety of issues of mutual concern in the course of these short three weeks before us. I am looking forward to a constructive exchange of views and I am confident that with your support and hard work we shall be able to go a step or two further in strengthening our consensus on matters pertaining to the important issues before us.

ANNEX II

Statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information at the opening of the fifteenth session

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I am very happy to welcome you to the fifteenth session of the Committee on Information. A novice to this Committee, I come to it with much expectation, and look forward to a productive and candid debate.

May I also convey to you, Mr. Chairman, our congratulations and warmest wishes and my thanks for your statements. It is especially reassuring to know that the work of our oversight Committee - the experts on whom we have come so strongly to rely - will be under your skilful, experienced and friendly direction. For our part, I wish to assure you, the members of the Bureau and the Committee as a whole, of my wholehearted commitment and that of the staff of the Department of Public Information to provide you with unstinting support and with the assistance necessary for a successful and fruitful session.

I must also, and humbly, apologize for the lateness of the documentation. We have reasons, but no excuses. We hope that we will be pardoned, perhaps not now but next year when we will be on time!

Over the last few years, the international landscape has been transformed - rapidly, dramatically and, hopefully, irrevocably. The cold war era is behind us, but in its wake we discover a world of contradictions. On the one hand, we witness the resurgence of conflicts and violence and a trend towards fragmentation. Yet, on the other, we see other conflicts subside and the dawning of a new age of revitalized international cooperation, as well as a willingness to seek collective solutions to emerging problems.

At this critical juncture, the United Nations now has before it unique opportunities to bridge the long-standing dichotomy between security and development, and discover new ways and instruments of involvement. We need, for instance, only flick on the television set, tune in the radio, or pick up the morning newspaper to experience the concept of second-generation "United Nations peace-keeping"; to realize that United Nations operations, and the expectations placed on them, are no longer subject to the confines of traditional definitions.

For, virtually every day, if some of the old and new tragedies still unfold before our eyes, we also see images of blue helmets monitoring elections and overseeing the peaceful transfer of power to duly elected Governments; working to rehabilitate or reconstruct countries ravaged by years of fighting; offering humanitarian assistance - delivering food, water and medical supplies, in other words helping people - and performing many other hitherto unthought of, yet absolutely essential, tasks in the quest of - to quote the Charter - "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". The words of former Canadian Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Lester Pearson, that "a world half rich, half poor, can never be at peace", are now not only an inescapable, but also an accepted, truth.

We stand, therefore, at a time of both great opportunity and enormous challenge - when the world looks towards the United Nations as a unique forum for, and an instrument of, collective solutions. With what Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has termed "a chorus of demands to do something" and "a crisis of too much credibility", the time has come to match the world's as well

as our own expectations with the political will and the means to accomplish the tasks set before us - or face the risk of failure and defeat.

There can be no doubt about it. Developments in the international arena have opened up an unprecedented window of opportunity for the Department of Public Information to capitalize on the renascent interest in our world Organization and in the promise that it holds, and above all on the values and the messages of the Charter. We also must work from now - actually we are already late - towards the realization of the information challenges posed by the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the World Social Summit, both in 1995. Together they present the formidable challenge of rededicating the Organization to the values of the Charter to a strengthened "Agenda for Peace", a/ and to a process towards a better world, along the lines successfully sketched out by the 1990 World Summit for Children and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio, with its Agenda 21. This process cuts through and embraces the goals and objectives of all the conferences and meetings of this and the coming years - human rights, family, women, population, and so on; it also, and most importantly, points the way towards a cleaner, healthier, more educated, just and peaceful world in the next millennium.

First and foremost among the Department's objectives is to increase dialogue and to grasp every opportunity to create a stronger awareness that the United Nations is more than the premier forum and mechanism for the peaceful settlement of disputes and the maintenance of international peace and security. It is also a system of programmes and activities intended to serve the needs of the peoples of the world.

We must first of all build an understanding that, as the Secretary-General has put it, "peace, democratization and development are one". They need to be treated as one in our information programmes - with the clarity of vision to see that peace, democratization and development form a part of a continuum; and, that there should be no diminution of attention when a nation, a people, moves from one segment of the continuum to another; that our engagement should not falter until the "better standards of life in larger freedom" envisaged in the Charter have been fully attained; that all this can only be achieved if public opinion is with us, and that its attention must be captured, sustained and encouraged in every possible way, with a view further to improving the Organization's image world wide and, at the same time, to make the Organization's new responsibilities better understood. To this end, we must take advantage of the critical scrutiny of public opinion to do our work, and to do it to the best of our ability. This is especially true today, when we witness an information revolution, when the power of communication - and therefore the media - has taken on a force of its own, actually taking part in forming political realities by forming public opinion.

To achieve these goals, our strategy is to open up an information programme that has been too prudent in the last decades, and to strengthen advocacy on behalf of the United Nations - and may I hasten to add that advocacy is a positive, constructive way of communicating, attracting attention, fostering dialogue and building alliances of support for the values of the Charter. It should not indeed be confused with propaganda, as referred to by the General Assembly in its famous resolution 13 (1) of 13 February 1946. We must sustain the current level of public interest in the Organization and its work and raise the level of understanding and support for its newly developing and expanding roles, for its continuing commitment to people and social development, for its underlying support of a world community advancing towards - as the Secretary-General calls it - "a new, integrated vision of peace and progress". And, looking inward, we must try to be and remain relevant to compete with the

multitude of images and sound bytes of an ever- and rapidly-changing modern-day information environment. We must keep abreast of developments and gather feedback from all parts of the world on the efforts of the United Nations, so that our colleagues in the Secretariat and we information professionals can build a true and fruitful exchange between the Organization and the world community. Finally, we must continue the development of information and communication strategies and structures that enable us to fulfil the legislative mandates which you, the Member States, have given and will give to us, while allowing us to respond to new events and new opportunities as they arise.

Our plan to implement these strategies will be to attempt correctly to deliver three types of information programmes: what I have come to call the "speaking information" - that is, the briefings and other support to the news media and delegations provided by the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General; the "running information" - meaning coverage through television, radio, photo and press releases on United Nations events and issues; and, finally, what I like to call "thinking information", that is our promotion and outreach, dissemination, dialogue and feedback information programmes, which now will also be able to take advantage of the combined resources of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and part of the former Publishing Division which have been brought to the Department of Public Information.

Without oversimplifying, Mr. Chairman, these last three concepts represent the broad strokes of the structure that I have been trying to give to the Department of Public Information since my arrival in March. This is more of a manner to organize our way of working together than a "restructuring", too much of which has been done in this Department in the past - sometimes to accommodate logics that are now behind us. It will not entail long periods of adjustment or create hardship for the staff affected, as sections are simply being shifted to the new clusters with people, functions and posts moving as integrated units. This "realignment" - if you will - should instead offer a much needed opportunity for the Department of Public Information to adopt an activist approach to information and to give renewed importance to the Department's advocacy function. Our goal is, through this approach, to heighten the awareness of the principles, messages and values of the United Nations; to bring about a dialogue with the public at all levels of knowledge and organization; to elicit feedback which will allow us better to target our audiences, responding to the logic of demand and not only to the logic of supply; and, therefore, to better focus our products and thereby achieve gains in effectiveness.

To follow with the order of my earlier image of "speaking, running and thinking information", I would begin with the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, which will continue providing the "spoken" information so necessary to news media and delegations in the conduct of their work. The Office also provides information support to the Secretary-General.

The "running information" will be provided by the Media Division (we have tried to give the new divisions names that people can understand), which essentially consists of the former Information Products Division minus the Publications Services. The Media Division will focus on providing television and press coverage services as well as the production and distribution of television, photographs, video and radio information products. It would also undertake responsibility for the media accreditation and liaison functions performed previously by the Dissemination Division. The Dissemination Division, which was an aggregate of unrelated functions, is being disbanded, as had been recommended four years ago by the Joint Inspection Unit.

The "thinking information" will be handled by two mutually reinforcing components. The first is the Library and Publications Division, which will

comprise all the activities of the Department of Public Information relating to the research and technical support delivered by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library as well as the planning and management of the United Nations Publications Programme, graphic design and cartographic support. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report on the revised 1992-1993 budget estimates (A/C.5/47/88), as at 1 April 1993, these functions have been transferred to the Department of Public Information from the Office of Conference Services where they were before. In addition, the Division will be responsible for preparing the Yearbook of the United Nations, the UN Chronicle, and Development Business.

The Department's publications, and on a larger scale the publications policy and programme of the United Nations, have received much attention both from delegations and within the Secretariat. Before you this session, you have two documents on publishing matters. The first, which will be circulated as document A/AC.198/1993/4, is the preliminary report on the Organization's publications policy, which is scheduled for submission to the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Carried out in response to section VI of General Assembly resolution 46/185 B of 20 December 1991, on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee, and resolution 47/73 B of 14 December 1992, on the recommendation of this Committee, the report seeks to inform and to elicit the views of delegations on the approaches which can be taken to rationalize our publishing activities, including perhaps, if you wish, a look at the logic of the new structures in place.

The second, document A/AC.198/1993/5, shows the Department's recurrent, or as we call them, "institutional" publications, and was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 47/73 B. We have tried to give a clear picture of these publications, which, for the first time, includes an estimate of their cost. We very much look forward to receiving feedback and suggestions from the Committee.

I believe that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library can be one of the greatest public information opportunities in the Secretariat. Now that the Library in New York is part of the Department of Public Information - by the way, no decision has been taken as yet on the Geneva Library - we believe that it should be opened up and more extensively used as an important tool not only of information and documentation, but of advocacy. It should be better supported, and more used, by Member States, and I would submit that, as a matter of course, a copy of every publication in the world about the United Nations and matters pertaining to its mandate should be automatically sent, free of charge, to New York and Geneva. And what is the cost of two books? I think it should be done by everybody. But, it would also be good for the United Nations and the public at large if the Library could become an instrument of international contact, ideally a cultural centre - from which a "culture of internationalism" could emerge. One could imagine lecture series by eminent minds, seminars, round tables, exhibits and celebratory occasions, all happening at the Library, the same way that similar events are happening at the New York Public Library. Life would be infused into a now dormant institution, making it resonate with the vibrations of the outside world. This would not be done in one day, Mr. Chairman, but we would like to have your reaction, as much as we would, of course, welcome your views on the integration of the Library within the Department of Public Information and on a more open and proactive role for this venerable structure.

Finally, the last of the four divisions, and the other "thinking information" structure, is the Promotion and External Relations Division. This is a new name, although we did have an External Relations Division in the past. This Division will incorporate all DPI "outreach" services by the Department to the public - be it directly, or indirectly through the network of United Nations

information centres, United Nations system cooperation, non-governmental organizations or United Nations Associations - what I like to call our partners and our allies. These are not only our best instruments to disseminate United Nations information, but also our vital counterparts to ensure the relevance of our message, and to seek to achieve an improved, and hopefully effective, communication with the world.

This "thinking information" entity will unite the previously dispersed responsibilities for the formulation of advocacy policies; it will provide and seek liaison and increased cooperation with substantive parts of the United Nations system - and especially with UNESCO, the World Bank, IMF, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and the various other agencies which are members of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, the so-called JUNIC, and with whom dialogue and cooperation can only be termed insufficient if we think of the possibilities and opportunities before us; it will strive to produce authoritative, demand-driven, thematically-integrated materials and direct those materials through the appropriate channels - be they United Nations information centres, non-governmental organizations (with which, I would like to add, cooperation must be substantially reinforced), United Nations Associations, interested individuals, or other conduits - to their intended end-users. It will also welcome and encourage the rechannelling of feedback received from the outside world, the field, the end-users, into the "thinking" process - that is, thematic information development. In practical terms, this Division will comprise the former Communications and Project Management Division, the network of information centres and the former Information Centres Division, as well as the Public Services Section, the Information Dissemination Service and the Institutional Relations and NGO Section of the former Dissemination Division.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary-General will maintain the administrative and evaluation functions, the Committee Liaison Unit and my Special Assistant.

While this will be the philosophy and the structure, there are a number of issues which, in my view, the Department of Public Information can tackle only working together with this Committee, and with the benefit of its expertise. We will also need, as I have already told its Chairman, the informal advice of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

We may have worked out the "what" and some of the "how" of the task before the Department of Public Information, and we are doing everything within our power to change the things that we ourselves can change, but we are very much aware that we cannot do everything on our own. We above all look to this Committee, as our guide, but also, I hope, as our partner and friend, to deal with matters that fall beyond our authority and our ability, and not only - may I hasten to add - because of the related matters of posts and money. With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I should now like to mention some of the important challenges which we earnestly seek to tackle together with this Committee.

It will not surprise you that one of our primary concerns focuses on the system of United Nations information centres. We have been giving a lot of thought to how this network has evolved into its current configuration and have looked at how it is working, and maybe is not, or how it can work better. The end result is that we seem to have even more questions than we had when we started. Two immediate questions come to mind: why are centres located where they are? And, why are some supported by the host Government, while others are not? We realize that some of the answers to these questions relate to historical developments, including the order in which requests for United Nations information centres have been received, and the General Assembly resolutions regarding the conditions of establishment. All of you are probably

as familiar as the Department of Public Information with the formula of recent years, whereby requests for information centres or components have been accompanied by the assumption that the centres could be opened "within available resources". We are now at the point where not only do we not have a coherent network of United Nations information centres, but the system is plagued by severe resource problems and the very viability of the information centres is threatened. For instance, operating funds can be so scarce that centres can - and do - find themselves unable to afford long distance telephone calls, or to purchase the postage stamps to mail out information materials to their intended local recipients. In fact, it has become like fitting a king-size bed with a baby blanket. The question then has to become whether we want to keep the king-size mattress and get an appropriate size cover, or whether we should keep the baby blanket and make the mattress smaller. Or can we - together - find a way of squaring the circle to make the best use of our own means and of those of the United Nations family and system?

In the past year, we have also begun to envisage the role that - if you will - the "second generation" of information centres can play in establishing what the Secretary-General has referred to as a "unified" United Nations presence in the field, while maintaining the functional autonomy of the units represented. We have begun to re-evaluate the type of information programmes we carry out through our field offices, examining the development side of our information strategy and seeking to define the most cost-effective, in fact the most effective, means of utilizing the resources available to the United Nations system as a whole to execute the important missions entrusted to us. A first result of this evaluation is that we do not have enough local staff at the professional level to do a good job in the local languages and with the local practices; that we do not have sufficient dialogue with the centres, particularly in matters relating to the so-called "thinking information"; that when centres are headed by UNDP Resident Coordinators, information should be not only development-related, but should be 360-degree information - as the French would say, "tous azimuts"; and, that the effectiveness of the network could greatly be helped if there were some additional ways of promoting the issues related to the "thinking information" - which is the one that captures and retains the attention of public opinion. But - do we have the money? At present, the sad answer is no.

There are three documents on matters pertaining to information centres before the Committee during this session: document A/AC.198/1993/6 on the allocation of resources to the United Nations information centres in 1992; document A/AC.198/1993/7 reporting on the integration of United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices; and document A/AC.198/1993/9 providing up-to-date information on the implementation of operative paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 of General Assembly resolution 47/73 B. It is our earnest wish that we can build on the information advanced in these documents, as well as in my remarks today, to forge a productive dialogue between this Committee and the Secretariat and to bring about some solutions - or at least to show the right way.

The same holds true for information components of field operations, which also are indispensable if we are to truly connect with the public. While the concept of "second generation" peace-keeping operations has gained broad acceptance, it is not equally accepted that the mandate of the public information components of these operations has similarly evolved. To use just one example, I will refer to the information component of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), where the United Nations is expected to take over with one third of the staff an information operation which was being carried out in Somalia by over 100 United States information specialists. How can we be expected to do the same job and, for that matter, expand it into the field of

field of sustainable development? We need to realize the critical role information plays in forming the grass roots, the national, the international, the overall political will to achieve the goals of the mission and, then, to match the resources with the objectives. For this reason, we need to ensure that the administrative and budgetary plans for all field missions integrate an information strategy and the means to implement it - building this in at the very beginning of any new peace-keeping operation.

The challenge is, how - and how fast (or how slowly) - should we adapt to these changes - some timid, all encouraging - taking place in some areas of conflict; and, how to adapt our message, how to open it to the positive and not to maintain it on the negative; how to seek what unites us precisely when there are still things that divide us. Without going into details, and because we know that we are walking on thin ice - we welcome the advice, and even perhaps hints, from this Committee.

Realistic planning, realistic goals, realistic funding are essential elements for success. Right now the Department of Public Information finds itself at the crossroads. We can no more retain the traditional United Nations concept of information of the cold war days, any more than the Organization can - or should - refrain from involvement in developments of a fast-changing world. We must - I would submit - move away from a static list of so-called "outputs", re-evaluate and set clear information priorities and move towards an integrated, proactive information plan, giving renewed importance to advocating the principles, messages, values of the United Nations and how they are at work - or can be brought to work - on the scores of issues on the international landscape. We need to maximize the use of telecommunications and other technological advances. We need to build in flexibility, the ability to act - and to react - with lightning speed to world developments - or, we will close the window on the opportunity before us.

It has long been assumed by modern political science that all was said when we said that public opinion was the partner of the policy maker. For my part, I dare to submit that public opinion is the anchor, not to say the substance of public policy. All public policies aim to serve the good of the public, and if the public does not adequately perceive that good, public institutions will fail. We have no other choice, Mr. Chairman, but to win public opinion fully to our side, if the United Nations is to enter the twenty-first century on solid terms with those that it serves.

I must say - I cautioned you, Mr. Chairman, I would be candid with all of you - the message is as great as the opportunities, and still we need a new spark. It is told that Michelangelo, after finishing his "Moses" and admiring his masterwork, took his hammer and hit the statue while asking, "Why don't you speak?". I am no Michelangelo and the masterwork is that of the Charter, not mine. But, when I came here from across the street in UNICEF, my frustration was very similar. How can we make the United Nations information speak, go out, cross boundaries, overcome shortsightedness, obtuseness and barriers, and reach the people?

The contribution that we in the Department of Public Information can bring to this challenge is one to strive for a higher degree of professionalism (which I believe the Department of Public Information has, even if everything can be improved), and, above all, foster a stronger sense of commitment, enthusiasm, openness and the will to work together. A lot of internal fences can, and therefore must be torn down; with these we can light the fire of a renewed sense of hard work and mission.

As I said, the task is great, but it is also difficult, and we cannot tackle it without you. Nor do we believe that this exercise can be conducted across a podium. It needs more than a formal exchange of views between the Committee on Information and the Secretariat. We are instead proposing that we work together on these issues. That we sit together as partners and friends with the same mission, and pool our collective wisdom, our experience, and, perhaps most of all, our genuine desire to make the United Nations Information Programme, and therefore the Organization itself, speak; that we make it more relevant, more proactive, more meaningful to the "we the peoples" by whom - and for whom - it exists.

Is this feasible, Mr. Chairman, if not routinely done? I do submit that it is. Maybe we could all benefit from a bit of unreasonableness. You see, George Bernard Shaw once said that the world is made up of reasonable people and unreasonable people. The reasonable accept the world as it is. The unreasonable want to change it. Let us try to change, together, what we can - that is, our Programme of Information.

We see the world changing all around us. To remain relevant, to form part of that change, we must together jump with both feet into the waters of conventional unreason. We must work together, using with respect, and with pride, the power of information to direct that change, with the principles and vision of the Charter as its driving force, changing the world for the greater benefit of us all.

Not wishing to abuse your time, nor to strain your attention, I have limited my already too long statement today - with the permission of your Bureau - to offering you a broad overview of the directions we envisage for the Department of Public Information and to trying to impress upon you that your collaboration, your considerable expertise and, especially, your support are absolutely essential, for only together can we bring these plans to fruition. The full text of my comments, including the required report on the Department's activities during the past year, will be distributed to you now. More copies will be available for you at the back of the room. I thank you for your attention, wish you a fruitful session and repeat our commitment to offer you every cooperation and assistance in your important work.

II.

In paragraph 20 of its resolution 47/73 B, the General Assembly requested "the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session in 1993 ... on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution".

The ever-increasing media interest in the activities of the United Nations over the past few years is most vividly illustrated by the unprecedented coverage of the United Nations and the Secretary-General in newspapers and magazines, on the radio and on television. The Department of Public Information has taken steps to keep pace with this ever growing demand for information about the activities of the United Nations while, at the same time, taking on the added responsibility of keeping the Secretary-General and senior officials informed of breaking news developments.

Confronted with an array of questions covering the entire gamut of United Nations programmes and demands for up-to-the-minute details of United Nations activities in the field, the Department has had to coordinate the flow of incoming information from each of the new operations and field locations on a

daily basis. To satisfy the needs of the media, the raw information received from the field must be tailored almost instantly into an appropriate format (such as announcements, statements, fact sheets, background notes) for dissemination to the press. The daily press briefing has served as the focal point for the release of this vital and timely information to all correspondents at United Nations Headquarters and world wide. In addition, the daily briefings for press attachés in the permanent missions, which take place immediately following the press briefing, serve the purpose of keeping the delegations informed of the ongoing activities of the Organization.

It should also be recalled that, over the past year, the Department has also been assigned the responsibility of keeping the Secretary-General and the senior officials informed of salient news developments on a 24-hour basis. By maintaining a virtual continuous monitoring of wire agencies and news agencies, the Department has been able to produce three news bulletins per day, as well as other special bulletins and studies, when needed.

The unprecedented interest of the media in the activities of the United Nations is, to a large extent, the direct consequence of its involvement in the area of maintenance of international peace and security. With the dramatic increase in the number of peace-keeping operations and their changing mandate now encompassing a wide range of tasks, such as the organization of elections, delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to the people caught in the fighting, or promotion of national reconciliation and rehabilitation, in addition to the traditional use of military observers to contain the conflicts, the Department has been faced with the challenge of informing the international community of its activities in the area of peace-keeping, peacemaking and peace-building in order to promote a more comprehensive and realistic image of United Nations activities and generate broad support, as well as avoid misunderstandings, unreasonable expectations and misguided criticisms. The timely release of accurate and coherent information materials prepared in close cooperation with relevant substantive offices is indispensable in promoting the understanding and generating the support of such crucial importance to these operations.

As part of its efforts to disseminate information relating to the priority areas of peace-keeping and peacemaking, the Department, in cooperation with the Office of Conference Services, issued the text of the Secretary-General's report entitled "An Agenda for Peace" in a booklet form. This booklet, produced in six official languages with a total print run of 163,000 copies, and also translated into 11 additional languages, sparked the interest and the imagination of the international community in what the United Nations could do in the post-cold-war-world period to strengthen and promote international peace and security. In addition, over the past year, the Department has continued to issue periodic information updates on all 13 peace-keeping missions currently carried out by the Organization, along with a number of comprehensive reference papers, feature articles, booklets and press kits.

As part of that effort, the Department cooperated with the Military History Quarterly in the preparation of a special section on United Nations peace-keeping published in the September 1992 edition, as well as in the preparation of a special supplement of this publication dedicated to peace-keeping. This information reached a wide audience of the Quarterly subscribers, while the special supplement was also distributed through United Nations channels. In addition, the Department is currently preparing a wall chart giving the chronology of peace-keeping operations, to be published in four languages. Moreover, the Department will reissue The Blue Helmets in 1995, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/73 B.

The Department has also continued to provide information support and technical assistance to the peace-keeping operations and other political missions. In that context, for example, it recently designed and produced a variety of printed and audio-visual information material on the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea. In addition, as part of the implementation of the proposed information programme for Somalia, the Department has made arrangements with Radio Cairo whereby its External Services Network would receive the Department's weekly news round-ups for adaptation and broadcast to Somalia. This interim arrangement, which became operational on 15 January 1993, was intended to provide a temporary outlet for the dissemination of information on the role and objectives of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) until a more viable option could be worked out on the ground. In order to assist the process of transition from the Unified Task Force to UNOSOM II in Somalia, in February of this year the Department sent a mission to assess the feasibility and modalities of turning over the radio and newspaper operation that had been managed by the United States forces to UNOSOM II. Based on its findings, the Department forwarded its recommendations to the Department of Peace-keeping Operations for decision.

The Department has also produced a number of print materials on peace-keeping operations. In addition to the two editions issued in 1992, another update on all current operations was issued earlier this year. This English-language publication contains concise, yet comprehensive, information relevant to each mission, including its background, composition and financing, as well as action taken by the Security Council and developments in the field. In view of the great demand for this publication, the Department is considering the production of the next update in other languages too. In addition, this year the Department prepared a long feature article on the activities of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia since it became operational in 1992. Together with 15 agencies of the United Nations system, the Department is also preparing a book on Cambodia to be written by independent authors and published in cooperation with an outside publisher. Regarding the situation in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia, in 1992, the Department issued a Reference Paper on each. They are currently being updated. In 1992 the Department also issued a feature article on the United Nations Angola Verification Mission II and on the work of the United Nations Special Commission on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

In November 1992 the Department, in cooperation with Time Warner, mounted the photographic exhibit "Somalia's Cry" in the Public Lobby at Headquarters. This exhibit, inaugurated by the Secretary-General and the Chief Executive Officer of Time Warner, was widely covered by the media. In addition, the December 1992 edition of Life magazine carried a number of striking photographs from the exhibit, as well as a full-page public service announcement by the Secretary-General. Time Warner donated this exhibit to the United Nations.

As part of its efforts to promote the maintenance of international peace and security and peaceful settlement of disputes, the Department has produced in six languages a pamphlet containing the text of the Declaration on Fact-finding by the United Nations in the Field of the Maintenance of International Peace and Security, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/59 of 9 December 1991.

In the field of disarmament, the Department has continued its cooperation with the Office of Disarmament Affairs. This collaboration resulted in the issuance of a press kit in November 1992, on the occasion of the release of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold war era" (A/C.1/47/7).

Another activity which attracted unprecedented interest of the public world wide was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, which shared the limelight of the world's attention on this issue of concern to people everywhere. The report on the results of the system-wide information programme for the Conference is before the Committee in document A/AC.198/1993/3.

Since July 1992, the Department has continued to promote the objectives of environmentally sustainable economic development through a broad range of information activities designed to maintain the momentum and satisfy the heavy demand for information on this issue world wide. A number of topical publications were prepared and widely distributed, including, to name a few, the Press Kit "The road from Rio" (English only), as well as "The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development", "Statement of Forest Principles", "Convention on Climate Change" and "Convention on Biological Diversity" (all in English, French and Spanish). With assistance from the Government of Denmark, the Department was able to make available the three negotiated texts adopted by the Conference, as "Agenda 21: The United Nations Programme of Action from Rio". Audio-visual materials produced on the issue of sustainable development include a 30-minute documentary entitled "The Earth Summit", in which the United Nations tries to capture "the spirit of Rio" with extensive coverage of the issues and colourful footage of events that made the Earth Summit the "Conference of the decade".

The Department has been making every effort to translate the broad interest and support for the activities related to the Conference and its aftermath into as wide as possible a support for other activities of the Organization in the economic and social field.

In 1992, the General Assembly was the stage for two major observances - the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Ageing and the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. To promote awareness of the implications of population ageing around the world, the Department developed an information programme for the observance of the International Day for the Elderly (1 October). An information kit containing eight feature articles on this subject was produced in English, French and Spanish. In addition, the Department prepared a portable travelling exhibit illustrating the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, which is at present on display at the United Nations Office at Vienna. In its resolution 47/86 of 16 December 1992 the General Assembly expressed its recognition of "the major contribution of the Department of Public Information ... to the global information campaign" on ageing.

To mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992, the Department prepared and widely disseminated to the media and non-governmental organizations a comprehensive information kit produced in English, French and Spanish. The Department also coordinated the preparation of the inter-agency book project entitled "The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons - A Decade of Accomplishment". This full-colour, illustrated book was produced in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition, the Department produced and displayed at Headquarters a portable, six-panel photo exhibit illustrating key concepts of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. It is at present on display at Vienna. Finally, as part of the observance of the International Day for Disabled Persons (3 December) at Headquarters, the Department arranged for a demonstration of advanced computer and other technology for disabled persons, and screened its award-winning film on disability entitled "Breaking Barriers".

This year, 1993, is being observed as the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. The commemoration of the Year, launched by a well-publicized cultural event held on Human Rights Day, 10 December 1992, has helped to bring to the fore the problems experienced by indigenous people in every region of the world, sparking a strong interest in information on this issue.

Over the past year, the Department has been actively involved in the preparation of information activities and products for the upcoming World Conference on Human Rights, scheduled to take place at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993. The information programme for the Conference, funded at approximately US$ 400,000, calls for a variety of printed material, including the Conference poster, a media kit containing several backgrounders, print public service announcements and a special edition of Notes for Speakers devoted to the issue of human rights. The Department has also prepared radio and television programming relating to this event, including the special radio and television public service announcements and special programmes for the "UN in Action" series shown on Cable News Network (CNN) and for the "World Chronicle". It should be noted that special attention has been given to providing materials to the United Nations information centres and, as part of this effort, 15 particularly active centres have received funds for special publications, seminars and other events related to the Conference. Last but not least, a series of supplementary information projects around the theme of the Conference has been developed with funding from the Government of Austria and the Centre for Human Rights. Among those are special television public service announcements and video newsreels, a programme involving eminent persons in the promotion of the objectives of the Conference, preparation of a screening of video documentaries and an exhibit of cartoons on the issue of human rights, as well as financial assistance to 18 media representatives from developing countries to enable them to attend the Conference.

Turning towards the future, the Department has several important tasks before it in the area of social development. These include the coverage and promotional activities for two major events scheduled for 1994: the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held at Cairo, and the observance of 1994 as the International Year of the Family. In addition, strategies are also being developed for the promotion and coverage of the three main events scheduled to take place during the fiftieth anniversary year, 1995: the World Summit for Social Development to be held at Copenhagen, the Fourth World Conference on Women planned for Beijing in September of that year and the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

With regard to the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the Department has over the last year also accelerated its efforts to develop a strong public relations campaign to promote the objectives of the Organization. Accordingly, it has initiated the formation of a design team that also included representatives from the United Nations Postal Administration, UNDP and UNICEF. The team produced a logo for the campaign, the design for a poster, as well as the outline for an introductory brochure. The Department will cooperate closely with a new Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Information and Public Policy and her staff.

In cooperation with Affiliated Advertising Agencies International, Inc., a network of advertising agencies in different countries, the Department has recently initiated an international public service advertising campaign through print, radio and television to promote the work of the United Nations in the area of economic and social development. The campaign will initially concentrate on the issues relating to human rights, peace-keeping and peacemaking, environment and the prevention of the abuse of narcotic drugs. The

Department provided the necessary information for this project and assisted in the development of specific messages, which will eventually be adapted by participating agencies to best suit the concerns of the public in their countries. This project will bear no cost to the Department, as the co-sponsor will undertake the necessary fund-raising. In addition, in cooperation with the International Public Relations Association, on 20 May 1993, the Department is organizing the presentation of the Annual United Nations Award, which is given for public relations campaigns promoting the objectives of the United Nations. Competition is open to participants from around the world.

• The Department has over the last year also continued its activities within the framework of the information programme on the question of Palestine, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/64 C of 11 December 1992. In this context, the Department has been making every effort to contribute to the ongoing peace process by fostering dialogue between the two sides. In the encounter for journalists held last April at Athens with the support of the Government of Greece, policy makers, political analysts and media personalities from the Palestinian and Israeli sides, as well as other experts on the situation in the Middle East, were brought together for an informal, but meaningful, exchange of views. Moreover, in cooperation with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Department is organizing another, larger encounter for journalists, to be held in London in June 1993. The Department would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to the Governments of Greece and the United Kingdom for their support in the organization of these events. On a related matter, it should also be noted that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in response to a request made by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, has recently prepared an update to its earlier bibliography on the question of Palestine, originally published in 1976. The current publication, to be issued shortly, is arranged in two parts, listing separately the documentation from the United Nations system and non-United Nations materials.

The Department has also pursued its anti-apartheid programme, starting to adapt its activities to the new situation prevailing in South Africa and to the new, positive approach of the international community to this issue. As all of the South African communities, political parties and leaders are themselves earnestly engaged in the dialogue aimed at finding the best ways to achieve the goal of a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa, the Department has directed its efforts at reporting on these developments as a means of helping world public opinion understand, support and sustain interest in the historical changes that are currently taking place in that country. The series on developments relating to South Africa recently published in United Nations Focus has been well received by the public. Depending on the evolution of the situation in South Africa, it is the intention of the Department to organize later this year a round table for journalists, to be prepared in cooperation with the Centre against Apartheid. The round table would be held in South Africa.

The Department has also continued, with considerable success, its efforts to raise international awareness of the economic crisis in Africa, and of the efforts being made by African countries, with international support, to initiate recovery through far-reaching economic and political reforms. On the basis of information published in the quarterly publication Africa Recovery and other publications of the Department, numerous articles describing the economic and other crises facing the continent appeared in both the international and African press. A brochure on African debt led to a request for consultations between the United Nations and the staff of the United States Congressional Committee on African debt that took place at Washington, D.C. on 15 April 1993, while the Department's publication on humanitarian operations in the post-cold war era

resulted in an editorial in The Washington Post which cited Africa Recovery by name - unprecedented for a United Nations periodical - as well as in Op-ed pieces in Le Monde, Corriere della Sera, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and other newspapers in Europe. The Department also worked closely with UNDP and UNICEF in publicizing the African crisis. As part of that effort, it co-organized a seminar for Senior European Journalists on the Organization of African Unity International Conference on Assistance to African Children, which was held later on at Dakar. The Seminar, held in London on 11 November 1992, received wide media coverage.

As mentioned earlier, the Committee has before it a report entitled "Continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information", contained in document A/AC.198/1993/5, that responds to some specific concerns of the delegations in this regard. Moreover, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/73 B, the Department, in cooperation with Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, embarked on a serious effort to eliminate the backlog in the production of the Yearbook of the United Nations, with a view to its restoration to a timely annual publication schedule. As a result of these efforts, volume 41: 1987 was published in March of last year and by December 1992, volume 45: 1991, i.e., the current edition of the Yearbook, was also published and officially launched, marking the first time in 30 years that the Yearbook was published within 12 months following the calendar year covered. Both these editions were externally printed with total print runs of 8,000 copies each. More than 4,000 copies of the 1987 edition were disseminated, resulting in a total income for the United Nations in royalties and sales of US$ 112,000. The 1991 current edition has been in much greater demand and it is expected that it will earn an estimated income of over US$ 121,000 for the Organization. The Yearbook continues to stand as the most comprehensive and authoritative reference source on the work of the United Nations and the Department wants to maintain this momentum. Accordingly, the preparation of volume 42: 1988 is at an advanced stage, with publication scheduled for this summer, while the current, 1992 edition, should be published by December 1993. With the 1989 and 1990 backlog editions scheduled for production concurrently with the current 1993 and 1994 editions for the publication in 1994 and 1995, respectively, the Department is determined to eliminate the backlog and after 1995 maintain a timely annual publication of this important reference book on the work of the Organization.

Over the last year, the Department has made considerable efforts towards achieving parity in the utilization of existing equipment in the press coverage of meetings in English and French, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/73 B. Accordingly, new computer equipment has been installed in additional conference rooms and efforts continue to improve the conditions for the press coverage in both languages. Moreover, further to another request made by the General Assembly in the same resolution, following the conclusion of the first part of the forty-seventh session of the Assembly, through reallocation of resources, the Department produced a press release containing the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Assembly, together with the voting records, in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

The Department has been devoting considerable efforts to the production and dissemination of information through radio and television broadcasts. It has been noted time and again that radio broadcasts in particular are an effective and low-cost means of reaching wide and varied audiences, particularly in the developing countries. Indeed, for more than four decades now, radio has played a key role in transmitting the message of the United Nations to all regions of the world. At present, the Department produces 37 radio programmes in 19 languages covering a full range of priority issues to the Organization. These

programmes are distributed on a regular basis to nearly 2,000 broadcasters in 193 countries and Territories.

The weekly three-minute television programme "UN in Action", produced in English, French, Russian and Spanish, as well as "World Chronicle", reach wide audiences through distribution to some 40 television stations world wide. In addition, some United Nations documentaries, such as "Hide and Seek in Iraq", have recently been placed in prime time on major television networks in a number of countries. It should be noted that, in an effort to meet the needs of international broadcasters and audiences, all video programmes emanating from the Department are produced in both the NTSC and PAL formats and distributed in all formats and standards, as appropriate. The videotape coverage of official meetings and events is produced on NTSC tapes which are converted to other formats by redisseminators that distribute them internationally, while direct satellite transmissions are converted automatically in the course of such transmissions. The occasional requests for television coverage in different formats are referred to a nearby external facility for conversion from NTSC to the required system.

The Department has always paid particular attention to its relations with the media accredited to Headquarters. It goes without saying that the interest in the activities of the United Nations has placed tremendous pressure on the limited facilities available to the accredited correspondents. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/73 B, the Department requested the Office of General Services of the Department on Administration and Management to undertake a feasibility study on the upgrading of the space and facilities provided to the media. The request emphasized the fact that there was no additional office space available for allocation to the news organizations, and that both the documents distribution area and the accreditation and liaison facilities were inadequate. At the end of April, the Buildings and Commercial Services Division of the Office of General Services informed the Department that they had contacted the original architects of the Headquarters complex and requested their views on the suggestion to build an additional floor on top of the cafeteria building. It was their view that owing to both the architectural impact, high cost and the practical implications, this option did not represent a suitable solution. The Office of General Services also explored the possibility of using some of the space in the former building of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, which was now the property of the United Nations, but those premises had already been assigned to the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. As a result, the Office of General Services was of the opinion that at present, the only feasible option to improve the working area and facilities for the press was to utilize the open space planning which would eliminate individual private offices and create a number of work stations to be utilized by all correspondents. The cost of such a renovation, including rental of swing space, remodelling offices, construction work and the actual move would amount to approximately US$ 1 million and would take about one and a half years to complete. In view of this situation, and the remote likelihood that this proposal would meet the needs and the expectations of all involved, I suggest to create a small task force to look into alternative options. In addition, in view of substantial financial implications involved, the Committee may wish to request the General Assembly to address this issue.

As noted by the Secretary-General in "An Agenda for Peace", non-governmental organizations are a very important element in the process of attainment of peace in the largest sense. Indeed, they have become key partners in the development process, providing at present over $5 billion a year to developing countries. Their contribution to the international community also includes fostering the public support and resources necessary for the successful implementation of United Nations programmes and initiatives. At present, some

20,000 non-governmental organizations from every part of the world have entered into some kind of a relationship with the United Nations system. Over the past five years, the number of non-governmental organizations accredited to the Department has more than doubled to more than 1,400. In addition to the annual conference of non-governmental organizations and weekly briefings on a variety of topics, the Department has produced a number of publications and provided other products and services through its NGO Resource Centre. The 1993 NGO Conference, to take place in September, will address the subject of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development.

In an attempt to foster a more fully informed public understanding about the work of the United Nations system and strengthen the positive image of the system as a whole, in October 1992 the Department organized at Headquarters the third Inter-Agency Information Fair. Information offices of 29 United Nations agencies and programmes took part in this extremely successful outreach effort which represents yet another example of inter-agency cooperation in promoting a joint image of the United Nations system as a whole. In this context, the report contained in document A/AC.198/1993/8, covering the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee in 1992 deserves special attention. The nineteenth session of the Joint United Nations Information Committee is scheduled to take place at headquarters of the International Maritime Organization in London from 20 to 22 July 1993. The provisional agenda for the session covers a whole range of activities of mutual concern, offering an important and most welcome opportunity to exchange views and consider areas where both the existing cooperation could be strengthened and new joint projects could be developed.

Last but not least, the continued fruitful cooperation between the Department and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, particularly with regard to the implementation of its International Programme for the Development of Communication, also merits special attention. Following on the successful cooperation in the organization of the Seminar for the Promotion of Independent and Pluralistic Media in Asia that took place at Alma Ata from 5 to 9 October 1992, a third such regional seminar, to be held at Santiago, Chile, is being planned for April 1994 to discuss the issues relating to the independent and pluralistic press in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is expected that this seminar will concentrate its attention on the independent rural press, as well as independent press in shantytowns around large cities and their role in the service of development and the environment.

Notes

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